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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ANKARA 006897

SIPDIS

TREASURY FOR CPLANTIER
NSC FOR MERKEL

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TAGS: [ECIN](#) [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EU](#) [TU](#) [EU](#)

SUBJECT: BABACAN: NO PLANS TO SEND ADDITIONAL PROTOCOL TO
PARLIAMENT

REF: A. ANKARA 6561

[B](#). COPENHAGEN 1803

Classified By: CHARGE NANCY MCELDFOWNEY FOR REASONS 1.4(B) AND (D).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary: Minister of Economy and EU negotiator Ali Babacan explained that the GOT had deliberately not created a new structure to handle the EU process so as to keep all ministries engaged. The GOT has no plans yet to submit the Ankara Protocol Extension to parliament. Babacan reiterated Turkey,s inability to make new concessions on Cyprus and was focused on marketing Turkey,s image to the European public. End Summary.

No Plans to Submit Additional Protocol to Parliament

[1](#)2. (C) In his first meeting with Charge since October 3, Minister of Economy and Chief Turkish EU negotiator Ali Babacan focused almost entirely on EU issues. (His office now sports both EU and Turkish flags.) In reply to the CDA,s question, he said that despite Enlargement Commissioner Olli Rehn's comments that the Protocol should go to parliament, the GOT had no specific plan to submit the Ankara Protocol Extension for parliamentary ratification. In part, this was due to parliament,s heavy agenda, especially the budget, but also because there is nothing specific in EU documents requiring parliamentary approval. (Comment: Most of our contacts emphasize the AKP government,s concerns about domestic political fallout. End Comment.).

Cyprus: Restated GOT position

[1](#)3. (C) Babacan,s only comment on the recently-issued EU Commission Progress Report was that the GOT was fine with it except for the parts about Cyprus. Babacan echoed other GOT officials that Turkey cannot make any additional concessions on Cyprus until the Greek Cypriots do more. On opening ports and airports to Greek Cypriot vessels and planes, he restated the Turkish offer that all ports and airports*including in Northern Cyprus*be opened to EU countries and Turkey traffic. At the end of the meeting, Babacan said the two most important areas in which the U.S. could help Turkey were Cyprus and the PKK.

PKK: Erdogan-Rasmussen Incident

[1](#)4. (C) Babacan said if the U.S. were seen to be doing something tangible against PKK, there would be a dramatic improvement in public perception of the U.S. in Turkey. He said he had spoken to Olli Rehn about his statements supporting Danish PM Rasmussen,s action with regard to a Roj TV correspondent during Erdogan,s visit to Denmark (ref B). According to Babacan, Rehn had made the comments after having spoken to Rasmussen but not to Erdogan. Note: Though he said he told Rehn he should have spoken to Erdogan first, Babacan,s manner suggested he did not want to belabor the issue. End Note.

Interministerial Approach to Accession Process

[1](#)5. (SBU) Babacan preferred to refer to the "Accession Process" rather than "Negotiations," reserving the latter word for the individual discussions of each chapter rather than the overall process. He described how the GOT will handle the three pillars of the accession process: 1) the political pillar, 2) compliance with the acquis, and 3) the communications and civil society pillar. On the political pillar, there was a supervisory committee chaired by DPM and Fonmin Gul, and including Babacan, the Minister of Interior and the Minister of Justice.

[1](#)6. (SBU) On complying with the acquis, he had the lead but would have the active participation of all relevant ministries. He explained the GOT decision not to set up a

separate EU negotiating agency. According to Babacan, the idea was to keep all the line ministries fully engaged. He said he is telling his ministerial colleagues that they are all responsible for the EU process and claimed he was trying to keep a low profile. He said he insisted ministries send "responsible authorities" such as Under Secretaries to the Brussels chapter screenings, and not just Ministerial officials responsible for EU affairs. Claiming the process is already working well, he said this approach will make it harder at first but in the long run will work better.

Marketing Turkey to European Public Opinion

17. (SBU) On the civil society/communications pillar, the GOT has established a committee composed of Foreign Minister Gul, Babacan and Minister of State Beshir Atalay, who was included because he has responsibility for an existing fund for the promotion of Turkey,s image abroad. Babacan seemed very much aware of the importance of marketing Turkey to western Europeans, noting that one of his majors in his MBA program at Northwestern was marketing. He said the GOT is beginning to brainstorm on public relations ideas with private sector PR experts and will eventually outsource much of the campaign to the private sector: "With my private sector experience, I know that Governments are not good at this." The public relations campaign will be differentiated for different EU countries and regions and the GOT is placing a particular importance on expanding student exchange programs. Whereas there are now 17,000 exchanges (two-way flow, not a stock) per annum, Babacan said the GOT plans to increase this number to 100,000 by 2008: "A 15-year old in France today will probably be voting on Turkey,s EU accession."

Comment

18. (C) The next EU/Turkey/Cyprus flashpoint will be when the EU reviews Customs Union implementation, including the Ankara Protocol Extension status and the ports/airports issue, in 2006. It is not surprising, on the one hand, that Babacan reiterated the GOT party line on the most politically-sensitive issue (Cyprus), since he is more of an implementer than a political heavyweight. As one of the GOT,s most internationally-aware and business-oriented ministers, Babacan seemed to understand the need for extra effort on marketing Turkey to European public opinion, and painted a credible rationale for the GOT decision to draw on interministerial teams to handle chapter negotiations.
MCELDOWNEY